



UNDERSTANDING STUDENT DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS TOOLKIT

Toolkit 1 of 10 in the Utah Teacher Toolkit Series

Prepared for Utah Leading through Effective, Actionable, and Dynamic (ULEAD) Education

In this toolkit, Hanover Research and ULEAD explore strategies and resources that current and aspiring teachers can utilize to meet **Standard 1: Learner Development** of the Utah Effective Teaching Standards and Indicators.

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INTRODUCTION

This toolkit provides guidance and resources to assist current and aspiring Utah teachers in developing their ability to support the growth and learning of all students via effective pedagogies and a commitment to students, families, schools, and the broader mission of education. In particular, **Utah teachers should constantly strive to align their daily work, skills development, and professional dispositions to the ten standards and related indicators of the Utah Effective Teaching Standards** (located [here](#)). Commitment to achieving these standards will allow teachers to support the mission of public education to “ensur[e] literacy and numeracy for all Utah children, provid[e] high quality instruction for all Utah children, [establish] curriculum with high standards and relevance to all Utah children, and requir[e] effective assessment to inform high quality instruction and accountability.”¹ Specifically, this toolkit provides teachers with tips, strategies, and resources to support their professional work and development around **Standard 1: Learner Development**.

Utah Effective Teaching Standard 1: Learner Development

 The Learner and Learning	Standard 1: Learner Development	<p>The Learner and Learning</p> <p>Teaching begins with the learner. To ensure that each student learns new knowledge and skills, teachers must understand that learning and developmental patterns vary among individuals, that learners bring unique individual differences to the learning process, and that learners need supportive and safe learning environments to thrive.</p> <hr/> <p>Standard 1: Learner Development</p> <p>The teacher understands cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas of student development. The teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creates developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences based on individual student’s strengths, interests, and needs; and ▪ Collaborates with families, colleagues, and other professionals to promote student growth and development.
	Standard 2: Learning Differences	
	Standard 3: Learning Environments	
 Instructional Practice	Standard 4: Content Knowledge	
	Standard 5: Assessment	
	Standard 6: Instructional Planning	
	Standard 7: Instructional Strategies	
 Professional Responsibility	Standard 8: Reflection and Continuous Growth	
	Standard 9: Leadership and Collaboration	
	Standard 10: Professional and Ethical Behavior	

Source: Utah State Board of Education²

Research shows that **teachers are the most influential and impactful element of the formal school system in promoting student achievement**. In fact, research estimates that teachers “have two to three times the effect of any other school factor, including services, facilities, and even leadership.”³ As the immediate organizers and supervisors of students’ educational experiences, teachers exert tremendous

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influence on student outcomes across multiple areas.⁴ These effects extend across dynamics such as academic achievement, attendance, social-emotional learning, behavior, future earnings, and college attendance.⁵

Consequently, teachers should strive to **maximize their effectiveness in all facets of their daily work**, from planning and delivering instruction to establishing a safe and secure learning environment to acting like a consummate professional.⁷ This requires an awareness of learners' needs, of systemic expectations, and of one's own strengths and weaknesses as they relate to professional practices and pedagogies.⁸ It also requires teachers taking concerted action to expand their content knowledge, strengthen their instructional skills, and maintain a professional and positive mindset with students, families, and colleagues.⁹

Aspects of Effective Teaching



Source: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development⁶

This **Understanding Student Development Patterns Toolkit** and the nine accompanying toolkits in the *Utah Teacher Toolkit Series* support Utah's current and aspiring teachers in meeting the demands of the Utah Effective Teaching Standards. In particular, this toolkit will help users progress toward those indicators marking high-effectiveness for Standard 1: Learner Development.

Indicators of High-Effectiveness for Standard 1: Learner Development

The highly effective teacher:

- Uses data from multiple measures to create appropriate and challenging learning experiences based on identified individual learning needs; and
- Takes initiative to engage families and colleagues in supporting each student's individual growth and development.

Source: Utah State Board of Education¹⁰

OVERVIEW

This toolkit:

- ✓ Describes the importance of teachers [understanding and recognizing age-appropriate child development](#) to inform their ability to support students;
- ✓ Presents strategies and tools to help teachers [acquire knowledge about their students](#) (e.g., academic strengths, learning preferences, interests); and
- ✓ Explains how teachers can [collaborate with colleagues and families](#) to promote student growth and development.

AUDIENCE

This toolkit is designed to support current and aspiring K-12 teachers in the state of Utah in meeting the indicators and expectations outlined in the Utah Effective Teaching Standards, particularly Standard 1: Learner Development.

RECOGNIZE AGE-APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT

First and foremost, teachers must recognize that, while each individual student will develop and grow at their own pace, they can make assessments on students' typical development and growth based on accepted milestones generated via research and observations of school-aged children.¹¹ These developmental milestones are typically organized across four periods or age classifications—infancy, preschool, middle childhood, and adolescence—and address growth and advancement in children's physical, social-emotional, linguistic, and cognitive capabilities and behaviors.¹²

Milestones "represent what an average child can do around a particular age" and act as general indicators of typical development upon which teachers, parents, caregivers, and others who interact with children can make decisions and determine the occurrence of developmental challenges.¹⁴ For example, in terms of cognitive development, a student aged 12-14 will likely understand figurative language and apply logic to problems, whereas a student aged 9-11 may not.¹⁵ Such indicators of development are useful in benchmarking students' skills and behaviors along the "typical" sequence, yet teachers should remain mindful that "all children are unique in their developmental journey."¹⁶

Growth and Developmental Milestones Resource

The University of Michigan Health System hosts a webpage (hyperlinked via the icon below) through which users can identify developmental milestones for children of various ages or age bands (e.g., age 6, ages 4-11) in five categories:

- Physical growth;
- Thinking and reasoning;
- Emotional and social development;
- Language development; and
- Sensory and motor development.



Source: University of Michigan Health System and Healthwise¹³

Sample Developmental Milestones by Age Band

AGE BAND	EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL	THINKING AND LEARNING
	<i>Children in this age band may...</i>	
6-8 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Show more independence from parents and family ▪ Start to think about the future ▪ Understand more about their place in the world ▪ Pay more attention to friendships and teamwork ▪ Want to be liked and accepted by friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Show rapid development of mental skills ▪ Learn better ways to describe experiences and talk about thoughts and feelings ▪ Have less focus on oneself and more concern for others
9-11 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Start to form stronger, more complex friendships and peer relationships ▪ Place more importance on having friends, especially of the same sex ▪ Experience more peer pressure ▪ Become more aware of their body as puberty approaches ▪ Develop body image and eating problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Face more academic challenges at school ▪ Become more independent from the family ▪ Begin to see the point of view of others more clearly ▪ Have an increased attention span
12-14 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Show more concern about body image, looks, and clothes ▪ Focus on themselves, going back and forth between high expectations and lack of confidence ▪ Experience more moodiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Have more ability for complex thought ▪ Be better able to express feelings through talking ▪ Develop a stronger sense of right and wrong



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AGE BAND	EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL	THINKING AND LEARNING
	<i>Children in this age band may...</i>	
12-14 Years (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show more interest in and influence by peers Express less affection toward parents Seem rude or short-tempered at times Feel stress from more challenging schoolwork Develop eating problems Feel a lot of sadness or depression, which can lead to poor grades, alcohol or drug use, unsafe sex, and other problems 	
15-17 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have more interest in romantic relationships and sexuality Go through less conflict with parents Show more independence from parents Have a deeper capacity for caring and sharing and for developing more intimate relationships Spend less time with parents and more time with friends Feel a lot of sadness or depression, which can lead to poor grades, alcohol or drug use, unsafe sex, and other problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn more defined work habits Show more concern about future school and work plans Be better able to give reasons for their own choices, including about what is right or wrong







Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention¹⁷

Teachers should also understand that a combination of biological factors (e.g., genetics), personal experiences (e.g., traumatic events), and the home and community environment (e.g., familial attachment) impact the typical progression and pattern of childhood development.¹⁸ For example, children who witness violence or who experience chronic instability in their home lives may see disruptions or delays relative to “typical” development.¹⁹ Comparatively, children who have strong and supportive relationships with their caregivers or who experience low levels of turbulence (e.g., moving, school changes) may experience more typical or accelerated development.²⁰




Determinants of Childhood Development

FACTOR/ CONDITION	CHILD-LEVEL DETERMINANTS	FAMILY DETERMINANTS	COMMUNITY DETERMINANTS	SOCIETAL DETERMINANTS
Environmental Factors				
 Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the child have space to play and explore? Is the child safe from contaminants (e.g., lead) or injury? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there overcrowding? Are there any housing conditions that contribute to ill health (e.g., moisture, mold)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there green spaces (e.g., parks) for children to play? Is the community safe from crime and environmental pollution? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there evidence of community building when planning new developments? Is there housing support for low-income families?
 Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the child have adequate clothing (e.g., snowsuit and boots in winter)? Does the child receive adequate nutrition? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the family experiencing financial stress or a high debt load? Does the family have a single parent or rely on one income? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there low-cost community programs for children and families? Does the community provide secure access to food? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are social assistance programs and subsidies available and accessible? Do programs exist that provide specific subsidies for food?

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FACTOR/ CONDITION	CHILD-LEVEL DETERMINANTS	FAMILY DETERMINANTS	COMMUNITY DETERMINANTS	SOCIETAL DETERMINANTS
 Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the child have quality childcare when parents or caregivers are working? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do families, especially single parents, have childcare stress? Do families have meaningful and adequate employment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the community have high rates of employment? Do families have to commute to access meaningful employment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there equality in income?
 Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does someone read and play with the child? Does the child have access to books and toys that stimulate literacy? Does the child attend quality early childhood education programs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What level of education do family members have? Do families have practices and beliefs that encourage literacy? Do families have access to early childhood education programs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is familial engagement in early education encouraged in the community? Are there options for adult and family education (e.g., language classes)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are programs in place to keep adolescents in school and improve their education? Is early childhood education valued and supported through policies and practice?
Biological Factors				
 Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the child a boy or a girl? Do they have a binary or nonbinary gender identity or expression? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there evidence of gender stereotyping or abuse in the family? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are women, men, and nonbinary persons from various cultures and backgrounds evident as leaders? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are gender equality and children's rights protected?
 General Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the child born with a healthy birth weight? Does the child have a medical condition or disability? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How was the mother's preconception and prenatal health? Do family members have chronic conditions or disabilities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there access to health services in the community? Is there community support for people with disabilities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there universal access to quality health and specialty services for children? Is there adequate financial and program support for families with disabilities?
 Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the child have a warm and nurturing environment? Does the child have consistent and responsive caregivers? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the mother's perinatal mental health? Do family members experience trauma, abuse, or poor mental health? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there programs to support mothers' mental health during pregnancy and postpartum? Are there community supports (e.g., respite care) that promote coping skills? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there societal support to reduce social stigma of mental illness and provide perinatal mental health services? Is there societal support to reduce social stigma of abuse and provide services for victims of trauma and abuse and those experiencing mental illness?
 Health Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the child have a pattern for eating, sleeping, and playing? Does the child take part in structured and unstructured physical activities for at least 60 minutes and up to several hours per day? Are children introduced to consistent oral hygiene practices? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the family attend to nutrition, set consistent times for sleep, and engage in active play? Are physical activity practices encouraged by family members? Are oral hygiene and dental health practices encouraged? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there parenting classes that offer information on nutrition, sleeping, and activity? Are community programs and spaces available to encourage physical activity year-round? Are low-cost dental programs available? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are free, active play and physical activity encouraged in pre-school, kindergarten, and grade-school curricula?

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FACTOR/ CONDITION	CHILD-LEVEL DETERMINANTS	FAMILY DETERMINANTS	COMMUNITY DETERMINANTS	SOCIETAL DETERMINANTS
Interpersonal Relationships				
 Attachment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the child show a secure attachment pattern to their primary caregivers? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the primary caregivers available and responsive to cues to assist the child in developing a secure attachment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are programs available to promote attachment parenting? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are primary caregivers given financial and instrumental support to develop a secure attachment with their child?
 Parenting Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the child experience a consistent parenting style? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do parents provide a consistent parenting style? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are parenting programs available? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the rights and responsibilities of parents recognized in workplace and other policies?
 Social Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the child have relationships with other adults and children? Does the child have friends and is there evidence of peer acceptance? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does the family have extended family and/or social networks they belong to? Is there evidence of acceptance of the family within the community or network? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are interest groups available that include the whole family (e.g., religious groups)? Does the community foster a sense of belonging for all families regardless of culture, religion, or sexual orientation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there societal support for the development of diverse interest groups that include the whole family? Is there evidence of support of human rights and lack of discrimination?

Source: Best Start: Ontario's Maternal Newborn and Early Child Development Resource Centre²¹

Knowing generally accepted child development patterns—as well as the factors that can inhibit or promote such development—will help teachers plan and deliver relevant instruction that supports student attainment in the target content area and promotes various facets of whole child development.²² At the same time, this knowledge will provide a strong foundational benchmark as teachers learn about their students' individual strengths, needs, and developmental progress.²³ To support application of this knowledge, the [Applying Knowledge of Development Reflection Guide](#) on the next page provides reflective questions to prompt self-guided investigations and targeted discussions about how knowledge of child development can impact teaching and learning.



Applying Knowledge of Development Reflection Guide

Directions: Use the following questions to self-reflect on your own knowledge of child development patterns and how that knowledge should influence your teaching. You can also use these questions to discuss such dynamics with your colleagues. Each question includes space for you to record notes.

1. How will knowledge of typical child development patterns help me to set appropriate instructional and behavioral expectations for my students?

2. How will I know if my students are developmentally ready for what I teach? What steps should I take if students are not developmentally ready?

3. Are there specific points in a student's development where certain changes occur that should affect the types of academic and social goals they aspire to?

4. What strategies can I use in my content area instruction to support typical developmental patterns for the age of students I teach?




Source: Office of Instruction Innovation, University of Texas at Austin²⁴

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ACQUIRE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT YOUR STUDENTS

While understanding typical development patterns for school-aged children is beneficial to teachers, they must also seek knowledge of the individual students in their classrooms in order to plan and implement relevant and rigorous learning experiences.²⁵ When acquiring such knowledge, teachers should target items related to students' personality, interests, identity, culture, and family alongside information about their academic and behavioral strengths and weaknesses.²⁶ At the same time, teachers also need to understand whether students possess any unique learning needs due to their language status, disability status, giftedness, delayed development, and/or prior knowledge and performance in the target subject area.²⁷ In short, teachers should accept that "[g]etting to know students and getting to know about them are important prerequisites for effective teaching."²⁸

Key Areas in Which to Know Students

AREA	DESCRIPTION	ASSOCIATED STRATEGIES
 Interest	Interest refers to topics, skills, or activities that pique a student's curiosity or inspire them. Teachers can discover their students' interests by determining what topics they enjoy or which activities they engage in outside of class.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Discuss their interests▪ Complete an interest inventory▪ Write a journal entry about themselves▪ Use classroom ice-breaker activities
 Learning Profile	Learning profile refers to a student's preferred method of learning new information or skills and to environmental, cultural, or identity-based factors that influence a student's learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Administer an inventory or questionnaire▪ Observe the student during class
 Readiness	Readiness refers to a student's knowledge and skill level regarding given content, which may vary across subjects or disciplines. A student's readiness may be influenced by prior learning, background knowledge, and life experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Review the results of past assessments▪ View a student's academic record▪ Examine work samples▪ Administer student self-report measures

Source: IRIS Center, Vanderbilt University²⁹

Interest and Learning Profile

A plethora of strategies and tools exist by which teachers can learn about the interests and learning profiles and styles of students.³⁰ Generally speaking, such strategies involve direct conversations or outreach to students and their families about those interests and learning preferences.³¹ For example, teachers can interview or distribute surveys to students or members of their families to gather information about students' backgrounds, home lives, interests, and preferences for instructional activities.³² The hyperlinked resources below provide sample questionnaires, and the [Student Interest and Learning Survey](#) on pp. 11-12 provides an example survey that teachers may utilize.

Sample Questionnaires to Help Teachers Learn About Students

Understood—a nonprofit that provides programs and resources to support people with disabilities—publishes three questionnaires (hyperlinked via the icons below) that teachers can use to gather information about students' strengths, interests, and challenges as they relate to teaching and learning. The questionnaires can be distributed to students and families to complete, or teachers can use the questionnaires to guide one-on-one conversations.

Student Questionnaire
(Grades K-5)



Student Questionnaire
(Grades 6-12)



Family Questionnaire



Source: Understood³³

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Student Interest and Learning Survey

Directions: Distribute the survey below to students to gather information about their learning preferences, strengths, and challenges—as well as their interests and personal goals. You can then use student responses to inform your future decision-making about curricula, instruction, and assessment.

Student Name:

1. When you grow up, what would you like to be? Why?

2. What are your favorite hobbies? What do you do for fun?

3. Are you involved in extracurricular activities (e.g., sports)? If so, what are they?

4. What is your favorite...

...movie?

...book?

...TV show?

...band/artist?

..._____?

5. If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go?

UNDERSTANDING STUDENT DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS: ACQUIRE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT YOUR STUDENTS

6. What is your least favorite subject in school? Why?

7. What academic and/or personal goals do you wish to accomplish this school year?

8. When you learn a new skill, which do you prefer?

- a) To have someone *show* me how to do it
- b) To have someone *tell* me how to do it
- c) To figure it out for myself

9. Do you remember new things best when you...

- a) ...write them down?
- b) ...say them repeatedly?
- c) ...draw a picture or diagram?
- d) ...act them out physically?

10. Do you prefer to work...

- a) ...individually?
- b) ...in pairs?
- c) ...in small groups?

11. What strategies or techniques can your teachers use to help you to learn?

Source: Multiple³⁴

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
Such strategies and data points help teachers identify student preferences for how they learn, determine what techniques have and have not worked for students in past learning, and catalog student interests.³⁵ Data in these areas will help teachers understand how to engage students in the target content area while also allowing them to anticipate potential challenges prior to implementing instruction.³⁶ Notably, **teachers should avoid using these strategies to label students as having a singular learning “style”**—as research rejects the usefulness of teaching to perceived learning styles—and instead, teachers should consider how to deploy student learning preferences and interests strategically during instruction.³⁷

Readiness

Teachers must also spend time assessing students’ readiness to participate in learning based on their existing skills, prior knowledge, and behavior.³⁸ Readiness represents students’ broader ability and willingness to engage in grade-level learning more generally and as it relates to discrete skills and content in the target discipline.³⁹ As such, students’ “readiness for learning on a particular day with a particular topic is influenced by many factors”—some of which overlap with their learning preferences and interests—including:⁴⁰

- Prior knowledge and performance in the target topic or discipline;
- Knowledge, understanding, and skill in topical or disciplinary prerequisites;
- Existing misunderstandings held about the topic or discipline;
- General communication, thinking, reasoning, and other skills;
- Developmental stage (i.e., physical, cognitive, or affective);
- Current and past physical and mental health;
- Interest in and attitude toward school, subject, topic, or teacher; and
- Learning profile match or mismatch of the task with student preferences.

Sources of Data to Assess Student Readiness

SOURCE	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
 Prerequisite Courses	Teachers can review course grades and results from prior year assessments that test pre-requisite knowledge and skills.	A French 2 teacher may examine data from French 1 to identify students’ prerequisite knowledge and skills.
 Related Subject Areas	Teachers can review grades and results from assessments in other subjects that assess pre-requisite or overlapping knowledge and skills.	A physics teacher may want to examine the results of students’ prior math assessments.
 Beginning-of-Course Task	Teachers can administer beginning-of-course performance tasks and assessments focused on pre-requisite knowledge and skills.	A Grade 1 teacher may administer a benchmark reading assessment in September of the current school year.
 Initial Performance in the Current School Year	Teachers can monitor students’ performance in the first few weeks of the course to determine their level of preparedness for more advanced skills and content applications.	A Computer Programming teacher may administer and analyze a series of performance tasks to determine students’ level of preparedness.
 Compiled Records	Teachers can review historical data, such as students’ writing or art portfolios, science projects, or grades in previous classes.	A Grade 3 teacher may examine students’ K-2 art portfolios.

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education and the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, Inc.⁴¹

Teachers should assess readiness using a variety of quantitative and qualitative measures, including students’ cumulative school records (e.g., grades, standardized

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test scores), conversations with students' past teachers and families, and observations of student performance.⁴² In addition, teachers can administer pre-assessments at the start of the school year or before specific instructional sequences to gauge student readiness as it relates to intended or mandated learning objectives.⁴³ Such measures and pre-assessments help teachers establish a baseline for student readiness that can then guide instructional planning and delivery, and that baseline can be further refined via the use of ongoing formative assessments.⁴⁴

On the following page, the [Baseline Data Worksheet](#) provides teachers with a tool to identify potential sources of baseline data on student readiness prior to a defined instructional sequence such as the current school year, a given semester or marking period, or even a more discrete unit or lesson series. The worksheet also includes prompts to help teachers consider how they can use collected baseline data to inform instruction planning and delivery and the provision of interventions for individual and groups of students.

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Baseline Data Worksheet

Directions: Use this worksheet to identify potential sources of baseline data on student readiness prior to a defined instructional sequence (e.g., school year, semester, unit). Then, use the worksheet to brainstorm how you might use the baseline data to inform instructional planning and delivery and interventions for individual and groups of students.

What are the target learning objectives or standards that students will need to achieve?	
What data sources (e.g., prerequisite courses) exist that I can leverage to determine student readiness for instruction aligned to these objectives or standards?	
What specific data measures (e.g., test scores, grades) might I collect from these sources?	
What information will these data measures provide related to student readiness?	
How can I apply this information to guide my instructional planning and delivery?	
How can I apply this information to differentiate instruction and offer targeted interventions to students?	

Source: Rhode Island Department of Education and the National Center for the Improvement of Educational Assessment, Inc.⁴⁵

COLLABORATE TO PROMOTE GROWTH

Teachers should actively deploy strategies to help families reinforce student learning and “shape [their] child’s social, emotional and physical development” at home.⁴⁶ This work includes giving parents and caregivers guidance, resources, and training on how to bolster the acquisition of new knowledge and skills and promote healthy development (e.g., social, emotional) outside of school.⁴⁷ In particular, teachers should provide families with:⁴⁸

- Information about the skills and knowledge required for students to succeed in the target grade, subject, course, and/or activity;
- Explanations about classroom policies and how families can monitor and discuss schoolwork at home; and
- Guidance on how to assist students to improve skills on various assignments or to practice social-emotional skills.

The Importance of Parent Engagement

A consistent body of research concludes that parents are the first and foremost influence on their children’s development and school success. When parents are involved, students get better grades and score higher on standardized tests. What is more, children of involved parents have better attendance records, drop out less often, have higher aspirations, and more positive attitudes toward school and homework.

Source: Center for Excellence in Family Studies, University of Wisconsin-Madison and Policy Institute for Family Impact Seminars, Purdue University⁴⁹

The most important thing to consider when collaborating with families is that teacher actions should “build each family’s capacity and confidence in their ability to support their child’s learning.”⁵⁰ For example, teachers should maintain regular contact with parents and caregivers to share instructional plans and goals and to provide data and feedback on students’ academic performance and behavior.⁵¹ Teachers can also provide families with explicit strategies (e.g., questioning protocols) or resources that they can use to promote student learning during out-of-school time.⁵² Furthermore, teachers should seek family input about how students learn best and ask them to share information about students’ home lives as necessary to support teachers’ work with students.⁵³

Parents’ Guides to Student Success

The National Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) publishes a set of guides (hyperlinked via the icons below) to support parents and caregivers of K-12 students in understanding the language arts and math content and skills students should learn in each grade. The guides also include descriptions of how families can support student learning at home and how families can collaborate more effectively with teachers. Teachers may wish to direct their students’ families to these resources to improve parents’ and caregivers’ ability to promote children’s growth and learning.

Kindergarten



Grade 1



Grade 2



Grade 3



Grade 4



Grade 5



Grade 6



Grade 7



Grade 8



High School: English



High School: Math



Source: National Parent-Teacher Association⁵⁴

UNDERSTANDING STUDENT DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS: COLLABORATE TO PROMOTE GROWTH

Tips for Sharing Data with Students' Families

- Approach sharing data with families in the context of the whole child. Be prepared to reassure families that their child's progress is more than the sum of test scores or attendance records by supplementing this information with daily classroom observations. These might include the child's social and problem-solving skills and contributions to class discussions.
- Be sensitive to families' diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds and recognize that these can influence the ways that you communicate with them. Ask family and community liaisons or other staff about using culturally and linguistically responsive ways to connect with families.
- Maintain accurate and timely data on student progress, and ensure that this information is accessible to families. Provide families with a brief definition or explanation of data that have been sent home or posted on an online portal. Doing so will help clarify what that information really says about their child's progress.
- Talk with other teachers to determine the best ways to share different types of data with families. Determine which data are best discussed in a personal meeting, which data can be shared during a phone conversation, and which data can simply be posted online.
- Review data directly with students, if it is developmentally appropriate to do so, and tell them that you plan to share the information with their family. This approach gives students an opportunity to talk to their families about the data—such as a test score or a disciplinary citation—before their families see them on a portal or in a progress note and allows students to develop a greater sense of responsibility for their school progress.
- Identify support staff, including family liaisons and guidance counselors, to work with families when needed. These staff might help with translation assistance and referrals for academic or other support services in the community. These individuals can also help facilitate families' ongoing use of resources such as online portals and assist families with implementing action steps to advance their child's learning.
- Take time to develop a trusting and respectful relationship with families. Establishing a sense of trust will help families feel comfortable talking with you about their child's progress and help them be open to suggestions about how to address challenges.
- Be mindful of privacy when meeting with families to discuss their child's progress. The most meaningful discussions will occur when family members can talk about their child's progress openly and honestly, so be aware of whether others can overhear conversations that might involve sensitive topics.
- Give families a voice. Do not feel the need to provide all the data or answers to student learning issues yourself—invite families to share their own data and observations of their child to make them active partners with whom you share a clear objective.
- Find an appropriate time during family-teacher meetings to specifically discuss test scores and other formal performance results. Starting off with these data—which can seem more impersonal than other observations of a student's classroom functioning—may not be the best place to begin a conversation.
- Be sure to share a range of data, including test scores as well as day-to-day observations of the student's behavior and performance. Present samples of the student's work to illustrate progress and to move the conversation beyond numbers and percentages. Help families understand what the data suggest about their child's overall academic progress and any learning challenges that need to be addressed.
- Avoid as much education jargon as possible. Keep in mind that people not directly involved in an education setting are often unfamiliar with many of these terms. Create a glossary of the most commonly used words and phrases to help families understand “edu-speak” terms that they are likely to see in print and online.
- Focus conversations on the potential for growth and improvement. Use the student's progress data to co-develop an action plan for growth, and discuss the specific roles that you, families, and the student will play in achieving goals.
- Provide families with resources to enrich their child's learning, and help them understand the best way to use the resources. These resources may include websites, activities, and lists of afterschool programs. Giving families a variety of resources is helpful, but try not to overwhelm them with too many—focus on those that are most relevant to their child's needs.

Source: Harvard Family Research Project, Harvard University⁵⁵

Relatedly, **teachers should regularly share information about academic performance and behavior with other teachers or staff (e.g., guidance counselors, paraprofessionals) who work with the same students.**⁵⁶ Specifically, teachers should work within established collaborative structures (e.g., grade-level teams, common planning time) to informally discuss student progress and to formally examine student data (e.g., academic performance, attendance, behavior) in order to identify

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students' strengths, developmental progress, and challenges.⁵⁷ As a community of professionals who interact with students on a consistent basis, teachers and other staff have different experiences with and perspectives on students that can contribute to the collective knowledge of all educators who work with specific students (and those students' families).⁵⁸

The Importance of Teacher Collaboration

Helping students learn is the main goal of teaching. Therefore, teachers should work more collaboratively to help all students learn. For instance, teachers can collaborate to develop formative assessments of students, discuss their findings of those assessments, and work together to understand the implications of those findings for their students. Teachers can work together to identify how students are learning, where students need help, and how to adjust their instruction. In addition, by working together to better understand students' social and emotional lives, teachers can develop and share knowledge that can help more students succeed. Where effective approaches to specific challenges do not currently exist, teachers working together can engage in joint problem-solving to come up with innovative solutions, try them out, and see what they can learn.

Source: Teacher Collaboration In Perspective | Spencer Foundation and Public Agenda⁵⁹

Teacher collaboration around students' academic progress, social-emotional development, and behavioral patterns is important so that individual educators and families can maintain awareness of student needs.⁶⁰ Guided by this awareness, educators (and families) can then plan and implement joint actions and provide appropriate supports to individual and groups of students that respond to those students' lived experiences, academic strengths and challenges, learning preferences, and behavioral patterns.⁶¹ Essentially, student-focused conversations will serve as a foundation for teachers' and others' work to promote students' academic growth and age-appropriate behavior and social-emotional development.⁶²

On the following page, the [Student Progress Check-In Worksheet](#) provides a tool by which teachers can share and record information related to individual students. The worksheet can be used to examine students' academic, behavioral, and other outcomes for the purpose of identifying areas where sufficient progress is being made and areas where students may require adjusted or supplemental supports.

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Student Progress Check-In Worksheet

Directions: Use this worksheet during collaborative discussions with colleagues about individual students. Table rows allow users to record data gathered via assessments, observations, and other tools that collaborating staff share during the discussion and to identify what those data indicate about students' academic, social-emotional, and/or developmental progress or challenges. Space is also provided to plan targeted actions to support further progress or to address specific challenges.

STUDENT NAME	
DATA OF NOTE (e.g., academic performance, behavioral observation)	
PROGRESS OR CHALLENGES INDICATED BY DATA (e.g., content mastery, social-emotional challenges)	
PLAN TO SUPPORT PROGRESS OR ADDRESS CHALLENGES (e.g., academic enrichment, behavioral intervention)	

Source: Peabody College, Vanderbilt University and Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific, Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning⁶³

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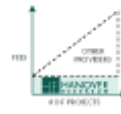
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